



# San Diego County SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

## NEWS RELEASE INFORMATION SHEET

Subject: Valley Center Pursuit / Collision

Person Providing Information: Sergeant Nathan Rowley

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Media Contact: On Duty Sergeant

Date of Release: 1/31/18

Time of Release: 8:00 p.m.

### SYNOPSIS:

On January 31, 2018, at approximately 4:15 p.m., deputies assigned to the Valley Center Substation Crime Suppression Team observed a white 1999 Dodge Durango driving in the parking lot of the Pala Casino. The vehicle matched a recent Be On the Lookout (BOL) for a suspect vehicle. When the deputies saw the male driver, he matched the description of a wanted felony subject known to be in the area and considered "Armed and Dangerous".

The deputies followed the vehicle as it drove through the parking lot and onto Highway 76. The deputies activated their emergency lights and siren to conduct a traffic stop. The suspect increased speed west on Highway 76, initiating a pursuit.

The pursuit lasted approximately two miles at speeds over 80 miles per hour. The deputies lost sight of the vehicle as it sped west on Highway 76. Moments later the deputies discovered the suspect had collided with a North County Transit bus traveling the opposite direction at the 10300 block of Highway 76. The driver of the bus and the lone passenger were taken to Palomar Hospital where they were treated for non-life threatening injuries.

The suspect, later identified as 23 year old Cesar Lopez, was trapped inside his vehicle. The vehicle momentarily caught fire which was put out by responding fire department personnel. A handgun was located near Lopez while extracting him from the vehicle. It took fire department personnel approximately 45 minutes to extract Lopez from the mangled vehicle.

Lopez was found to be in possession of loaded pistol magazines believed to belong to the firearm, suspected methamphetamine, and drug paraphernalia on his person. Additional checks, identification cards, a passport, and other suspected stolen property was located in Lopez's vehicle.



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It was discovered Lopez was on Post Release Community Supervision (Parole per AB109) for felonious theft, had two felony warrants and one misdemeanor warrant for his arrest. Lopez was arrested for multiple felony charges related to the pursuit and weapon possession with additional charges pending investigation.

Lopez was taken to Palomar Hospital for treatment and will be booked into the Vista Detention Facility at a later time. The collision is being investigated by the California Highway Patrol.